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HISTORY OF ENGLISH NONCONFORMITY FROM WICLIF TO THE CLOSE OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY. HENRY W. CLARK. Chapman & Hall, London. 2 vols., 1911, 1913. Pp. xvii, 439; xx, 458.

These two sturdy volumes are from the pen of an English Congregational minister, now devoting himself principally to literature and history. They will repay reading. While the story of English Nonconformity is told with no little fulness, and many of its leaders are characterized with much clearness, it is by no means a history of the ordinary pattern. Mr. Clark's work is primarily an interpretation of English religious life in the light of his fundamental definition of Nonconformity. "The Nonconformist spirit is, in succinct summary, the spirit which exalts life above organization. More than that, it is the spirit which holds that life should *make* organization, and that organization is at least greatly reduced in value (sometimes even valueless, sometimes even actually harmful) unless it be thus the direct product of life." This principle constitutes the touchstone by which the author would test all English religious organization. Democracy in church administration; freedom from any particular form of ecclesiastical control, especially if that freedom implies submission to another form; even the attempt to reproduce some supposedly Biblical pattern of the Church—all these are misreadings of the real Nonconformist spirit.

Of that true Nonconformist spirit Mr. Clark finds Wiclif the brightest illustration. In him it showed itself in a purity and power since scarcely equalled in English religious life. Its fundamental character was, however, soon obscured. Naturally the author finds little of it in the story of the Reformation. Nor do the earlier English Presbyterians, with their belief in a *jure divino* model of the Church, seem to him much better exemplars. "When Presbyterianism, through the voices or the pens of Cartwright, Travers, and their colleagues, contended for the establishment of the Genevan system as the one thing—or at least the first thing—demanded by the interests of religion, we are not within sound of a call to make organization secondary to, and the product of, life; the call is still for the establishment of an organization on which life is supposed to depend; and it is not the Nonconformist spirit that can be credited with the authorship of a call like this." With Puritanism the case is somewhat better. "The Puritans assuredly embodied the Nonconformist protest in some degree." Yet Puritanism lost its clerical leadership largely through the policy of Laud, which settled New England, "with the consequence that Puritanism, being lay and undirected, and allying itself with Presbyterianism

for ends of political reform, became merged in Presbyterianism and virtually ceased to exist." Independency was in scarcely more satisfactory situation, for it "fell into that falseness to its own principles shown in the ecclesiastical settlement of Cromwell's time." Quakerism, indeed, "was a new protest of the Nonconformist spirit"; but it too, free as it was in its beginnings, had organization imposed upon it, rather than spontaneously growing out of it, before the death of its founder.

With the Restoration the Nonconformist ideal, in the author's understanding of it, largely faded. The first struggle of Dissent was for the right to live. Toleration, won in 1689, was followed by spiritual decline, which brought the Nonconforming communions to their lowest ebb, till their current was changed by the effects of the work of Wesley and Whitefield, in which Mr. Clark sees "the resurrection of Puritanism within the Established Church." Since then the progress has been upward, first through a revived religious zeal, and then through increasing freedom from outward shackles; but the real meaning of the Nonconformist spirit is far from being grasped in its fulness by the Nonconformist churches even yet. Of modern men, Dale of Birmingham most fully comprehended it. "It is no extravagance to say that if one sets one's hand imaginatively upon Wiclif's head, and then brings the hand down the years along the ranks of those by whom the Nonconformist principle has been expounded, it is only when the hand comes to Dale that it rests again upon a head quite as high."

The author is specially critical of the conception that Congregationalism finds its value chiefly as an expression of democracy in the Church. Its primal vision was of "the Church as a body of Christian men and women through whose united minds and wills the mind and will of the living Head of the Church were revealed, through whose united voices the voice of the living Head of the Church was heard, through whose united hearts the very life of the living Head of the Church was beating." Oppression led, however, to emphasis on "toleration" and "freedom." "That Congregationalism represents 'self-government,' the settlement of Church affairs by a sort of process of parliamentary debate and division, has been assumed by practically all historians who have touched the theme; and worse still, it has to be confessed that many Congregationalists themselves have accepted and still accept the reading as correct." To the author's thinking such a definition of Congregationalism "is really an intrusion of the Conformist spirit."

This is a suggestive work. The author's thesis is vigorously maintained. But at the risk of being classed as a "Conformist," the reviewer is constrained to feel that we have here, as so often in English Dissenting literature, a point of view which, developed under the dominance of an ever-present Establishment, emphasizes the ideal and the theoretical at the expense of the practical. Christian organization has always been the product of life—that is, of life in some period and some part of the Christian community. The question of the extent to which the institutions produced by the life of a by-gone age should serve to express the life of the present, or of one land those of another, is undoubtedly most difficult. But at least equally difficult is it to see just how, as a practical matter, the life of any given period can "make organization" that will not of necessity include much of inherited form and method which may not be the immediate outgrowth of the life of the particular age. Doubtless a compromise will always be made between the principles which the author styles "Conformity" and "Nonconformity"; and such compromise has been the actual history of English Nonconformity.

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THE RISE AND FALL OF THE HIGH COMMISSION. ROLAND G. USHER. Clarendon Press. 1913. Pp. 380. 15s.

The recent dictum of one of our most distinguished scholars, that for "very very much history there is more importance in the ancient error than in the new-found truth," is significantly illustrated in the apparent ineradicability of the old idea that the Star Chamber and Court of High Commission were originally and always instruments of tyranny and oppression. The bitter hostility of their many opponents during the last decade of their existence, when they were the tools of a monarch as unpopular and inefficient as his Tudor predecessors had been the reverse, has blinded posterity to the indubitable fact, that during the vastly preponderant portion of their lifetime, they were both regarded as useful and beneficent institutions. But the efforts of modern historians to secure any general recognition of this truth, outside the pale of the specialists, have met with singularly little success. Hitherto the Star Chamber has been the beneficiary of the larger number of attempted rehabilitations; but now the sister institution has evoked a doughty champion in the person of Professor Usher; to whose diligent labors in